

Letter from Robert Als to Eugène Schaus (8 September 1960)

Caption: On 8 September 1960, Robert Als, Luxembourg Ambassador to Paris, sends Eugène Schaus, Luxembourg Minister for Foreign Affairs, a letter in which he gives an account of an interview with his Dutch counterpart, Jan Willem Beyen, on General de Gaulle's concept of a Europe of States.

Source: Archives Nationales du Luxembourg, Luxembourg. Ministère des Affaires étrangères. Coopération politique européenne-Questions fondamentales. Antécédents-Conversations bilatérales, AE 13074.

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Paris, 8 September 1960

The Luxembourg Ambassador to France
to
His Excellency
Mr Eugène Schaus
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Luxembourg

Re: Talks between General de Gaulle and the other governments of the Six.

I talked yesterday to my Dutch colleague, Mr Beyen.

Mr Beyen told me: 'My duty of discretion does not prevent me from saying what I think about the plan which General de Gaulle has just put to our Prime Minister Mr Quay and our Foreign Minister Mr Luns, since General de Gaulle made this plan public himself when he repeated it, almost word for word, at his press conference of 5 September.

'General de Gaulle's ideas on Europe are worrying. We had hoped that he would move towards being more European. But it appears that the substance of his thinking and that of the Prime Minister, Mr Debré, is at odds with the European integration towards which we have been working hitherto. It is even at odds with the views of several ministers in the current French Government.

'Our ministers were very frank with General de Gaulle.

'Is there not a danger that the new political organisation of Europe may take shape without the smaller countries being consulted and against their interests? If it were not for the Six, the General would not even have thought of inviting us to these talks. New policy would be framed at the expense of the Communities which we have been at such pains to establish.

'Britain obviously bears some responsibility here, not least because of her failure to make proper use of so precious an instrument as WEU.

'There is no provision in Dutch law for a referendum of the kind proposed by General de Gaulle. For us the idea of a referendum has always had a whiff of Napoleon, and even Hitler, about it.

'Under the Dutch constitution sovereignty rests not with the people, but with the Queen. Even a socialist like Mr Drees would never dare meddle with that.

'Generally speaking, Holland will do nothing which is likely to detach it from Britain or the United States. The General's policy towards NATO could end up alienating the Americans from Europe.

'It is true that Adenauer did an about-turn after Rambouillet. Maybe out of concern for Berlin. But he went too far. He dropped Hallstein, which was not right, even if one thinks that Hallstein had perhaps gone too far.'

I venture to reproduce at the bottom of this last report, albeit with no guarantees as to its accuracy, an extract from an article by Paul Dehème dated 6 September. Mr Macmillan, somewhat alarmed at the turn of events, was supposedly considering a rapprochement with de Gaulle. He complained that the newly created smaller free-trade area was an albatross around his neck. He was also displeased that he had not yet been told of the

French plans and that Paris had replied very late to his offer to visit the Élysée in the near future. He was also rather cross with Adenauer, whom he accused of having left him in the dark about the Rambouillet talks. Britain might very soon make overtures to France, the prime achievement — if not the sole objective — of which would be to dislodge Dr Adenauer from the position of mediator which he seemed eager to assume. And that would be quite in line with the eternal seesawing to and fro which was the golden rule in Britain's European policy.

At his weekly press conference yesterday the Chief Information Officer at the Quai d'Orsay, Mr Baraduc, was bombarded with questions from the Italians and Dutch, who expressed great concern. Mr Baraduc sought to play down some of the things said by General de Gaulle at his press conference, seemingly trying above all to minimise the General's remarks about NATO, but his Italian questioner was not convinced.